

[REDACTED], rather than hold up the final application to investigate [REDACTED] further.

According to the OI Attorney, the FISC legal advisor raised no other issues and did not further question the application's reliance on Steele's reporting.

B. The FBI's Completion of the Factual Accuracy Review ("Woods Procedures")

On October 19, the OI Unit Chief "signed out" the cert copy of the application and cert memo, so that the FBI could complete the FISA verification process known as the Woods Procedures, described in Chapter Two. Case Agent 1 was the agent responsible for compiling the supporting documentation into a Woods File, performing the field office database checks on Carter Page, and completing the accuracy review of each fact asserted in the FISA application. His supervisor for the Carter Page investigation, SSA 1, was responsible for confirming that the Woods File was complete and for double checking the factual accuracy review to confirm that the file contained appropriate documentation for each of the factual assertions in the FISA application.

With respect to the factual accuracy review, Case Agent 1 told us that he personally compiled the supporting documentation in the Woods File and then went through the factual statements in the cert copy one-by-one and made sure that each factual assertion was verified by a corresponding document in the Woods File. After he completed his review of all the factual information, he said he turned the Woods File over to SSA 1, and SSA 1 and Case Agent 1 then performed a second factual accuracy review of the same information together. SSA 1 said he found that each factual assertion was supported by documentation in the Woods File, and he had no concerns with how the Woods Procedures were completed. SSA 1 told us that he relied on Case Agent 1 to highlight each relevant fact in the supporting document in the Woods File, and that once he verified that each highlighted fact corresponded to a factual assertion in the application, he would move on to the next fact, without necessarily reviewing the entire document.²⁸⁷ On the evening of October 20, Case Agent 1 and SSA 1 signed the "FISA Verification Form" or "Woods Form" affirming the verification and documentation of each factual assertion in the application.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ We do not believe that this process, even when faithfully executed, is sufficient to ensure that all factual assertions in the application had adequate supporting documentation.

²⁸⁸ As discussed in detail in Section IV below, we examined the completeness of the Woods File by comparing the facts asserted in the first FISA application to the documents maintained in the Woods File. Our comparison identified instances in which facts asserted in the application were not supported by documentation in the Woods File. Specifically, we found facts asserted in the FISA application that have no supporting documentation in the Woods File, facts that have purported supporting documentation in the Woods File but the documentation does not state the fact asserted in the FISA application, or facts that have purported supporting documentation in the Woods File but the documentation shows the fact asserted is inaccurate. The three most significant Woods errors, which are among the five problematic issues we describe later in Section IV, were: (1) the failure to seek and document Handling Agent 1's approval of the source characterization statement for Steele; (2)

After Case Agent 1 and SSA 1 signed the Woods Form, they passed the Woods Form, cert copy, and cert memo (collectively referred to as the FISA or application "package") to a Headquarters Program Manager assigned the responsibility of signing the final application under oath attesting that the factual information was true and correct. The Headquarters Program Manager was an SSA in the CD's Counterespionage Section. His official duties at the time did not include supervising the Carter Page investigation, contrary to what was stated in boilerplate language in the FISA application. Instead, he was briefed into the Crossfire Hurricane investigation on or about September 23 for the purpose of swearing out the Carter Page FISA.²⁸⁹ The Headquarters Program Manager told us that after he was briefed, he attended some of the team meetings and had multiple conversations with Case Agent 1, SSA 1, and the OGC attorneys for updates on the status of and changes to the application. He said he read the entire application before it was final and, as changes were made to the application, he reviewed the changes. He said he had no specific memory of reviewing the Woods Form or Woods File (as described in Chapter Two, the Woods Procedures do not require the affiant to review the Woods File), but he believes that he would have done both since the Woods File was compiled at Headquarters, and thus he would have had access to it. However, he said he trusted that the case agent verified the accuracy of the factual assertions, as the case agent was required to do as part of the Woods Procedures. Further, the Headquarters Program Manager said that he was not independently aware of any information suggesting that the information in the application was inaccurate. After the Headquarters Program Manager signed the affidavit in the application declaring under penalty of perjury that the information in the application was true and correct, he submitted the application package to the OGC Attorney.

The OGC Attorney and Deputy General Counsel Anderson reviewed the application package on behalf of OGC's National Security and Cyber Law Branch. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, FBI procedures do not specify what steps must be taken during the final OGC legal review.²⁹⁰ The OGC Attorney, who had participated in the drafting process and was familiar with the content of the application, told us that he reviewed the Woods Form with the Headquarters Program Manager. After the OGC Attorney confirmed that all of the Woods Procedures had been completed, he signed the cert memo below the OI Unit Chief's signature and submitted the package to Anderson.

the fact that documentation in the Woods File used to support the FBI's statement that Steele only shared his election related information with Glenn Simpson actually stated that Steele also shared the information with the State Department; and (3) the fact that documentation in the Woods File used to support the FBI's assertion that Carter Page did not refute his alleged contacts with Sechin and Divyekin to an FBI CHS in actuality stated that Page specifically denied meeting with Sechin and Divyekin to the CHS. We provide examples of other Woods related errors in Appendix One.

²⁸⁹ According to the Headquarters Program Manager, because the investigation was closely-held and being run out of Headquarters, it was initially not assigned to a specific unit in the Counterintelligence Division and therefore did not have an assigned program manager.

²⁹⁰ We make a recommendation in Chapter Eleven that addresses this issue.

Anderson told us that she reviewed the cert memo and Woods Form and determined that the application package was complete, all the steps of the Woods Procedures were represented to have been taken, the probable cause standard was met, and there were no outstanding issues. She then signed the cert memo below the other signatures, signifying that the application was ready for certification, and she gave the application package to the OGC Unit Chief for submission to the FBI Director.²⁹¹

C. FBI Director's Certification

Comey certified the Carter Page application on behalf of the FBI. In Chapter Two, we described the elements of the certification required by the FBI Director or Deputy Director, including that the information sought through the requested FISA authority is foreign intelligence information that cannot reasonably be obtained by normal investigative techniques and is necessary to protect the United States against clandestine intelligence activities. In this regard, the Director's certification is different from the approval of the NSD AAG, DAG, or the Attorney General, which requires that the signatory find that the application satisfies the FISA's statutory requirements.

Comey told the OIG that when he was Director his practice varied in terms of whether he would read a FISA application itself before certifying an application, or whether he would rely solely on the description of the application in the cert memo. He said that he would read applications if they required special attention, but that from time to time he would also select others to read for quality control purposes. In this instance, Comey said he read the application because of its sensitivity. He further stated that he read the application once, after Baker presented the final package to him. He said he did not recall any conversations with Baker or with others about the application.

Baker told us that he presented the final package to Comey because he wanted to discuss the foreign intelligence purpose with Comey before Comey signed the certification. Baker said that in addition to explaining the foreign intelligence purpose to Comey, he wanted to make sure that Comey knew that he (Baker) had read the FISA and was satisfied that the probable cause standard was met. According to Baker, Comey told him that he understood, was satisfied with the foreign intelligence purpose, and was glad Baker read the application.

Comey told us that the application seemed factually and legally sufficient when he read it, and he had no questions or concerns before he signed. When we

²⁹¹ Anderson told us that she did not read the FISA application at this stage in the process, which she said was not unusual. She said that her general practice was to rely upon the cert memo's description of the probable cause, unless there was a reason to dig deeper into the application based on her review of the cert memo or if she was familiar with the case from an earlier stage. As described previously, in this case, Anderson had read the Carter Page FISA application once before during the review process and she believed that both Baker and the OGC Unit Chief had also read and provided feedback on the application. As described previously, Baker provided comments on a draft of the application. The OGC Unit Chief told us that she read the application and was involved in discussions about it, but she said she did not recall requesting edits.

asked him why the FBI moved forward with an application on a target who was formerly connected to a presidential campaign, based in part on source reporting that may have been funded by the opposing political party and had not yet been corroborated, Comey said that the reason was because there was probable cause to believe that Page was an agent of a foreign power. He said that simply because the information regarding Page was uncorroborated at the time of the application did not mean that it was unreliable. He stated that in this case, he understood that the FBI assessed that Steele was a credible source, with a network of sub-sources in positions to receive information, and the core of the Steele reporting was consistent with other information the FBI had at the time.

Comey signed the application on October 20, and the application package was presented to Yates on October 21.

D. DAG Oral Briefing and Approval

Yates told the OIG that she did not recall the discussion that took place at the October 21 oral briefing when NSD presented the final application package to her. Evans said that he recalled that because Yates had already read the FISA application and was familiar with its contents, the OI Attorney used the oral briefing to advise her of the FISC legal advisor's questions and the changes made in the final application to address those questions. Evans said that he recalled little discussion during the oral briefing on this application before Yates signed the application.

The OIG asked Yates about her views on the application. Yates told us that, in her view, the application did not present a close call from a legal sufficiency standpoint, and she was comfortable that it was an appropriate investigative step to take. In terms of the specific reasons she approved the application, Yates stated:

Well, several things here. First, the context of the issue that we're talking about here, which is the Russian attempt to interfere in the 2016 presidential election, and the potential involvement of U.S. persons in that, is obviously a critically important topic. This is not some tangential run-of-the-mill crime. This is, to state the obvious here, critically important to the country. So we start sort of with the premise of, this is a topic that we need to get to the bottom of.

Secondly, Carter Page is not someone who just popped up out of the blue on the FBI's radar, with respect to his relationship with the Russian government. He is someone who had been on the radar for quite some time, both in terms of, and I think it's laid out in the FISA, the attempts to recruit him that had been laid out in a prior criminal case, and the FBI's knowledge of interaction that he had had in the past, and was continuing to have, with high-level people in the Russian government. So, it's not as if, just some guy who had never had any relationship with Russia has been alleged to be involved in the Russians' interference in the election.

[T]hat's also against the backdrop of the information that Papadopoulos had provided, and that then was corroborated to the extent that then WikiLeaks did do the email dump, as predicted there, and identified that a person in the campaign that was coordinating that.

Combined with [Steele], who had been someone with whom the FBI had worked for many years, both in an official capacity at [REDACTED], and then afterwards, whom they had found to be credible. I believe criminal cases had been made, or he had participated in criminal cases[.] So again, not just somebody out of the blue. And he was also very knowledgeable of Russia, which is not an easy place to break into, in terms of getting information.

...[I]t may have been, the information that [Steele] had acquired, may have been at the behest of the Clinton campaign or the DNC. I guess I would emphasize the word "may" there. That again, my understanding was that the FBI did not know who he was working for. In fact, and this is one of these things I have a hard time teasing out, what I knew then versus what I may know now, or have learned since, is that [Steele], my understanding is at one point, was actually working for someone connected with the Republican Party. I don't know, again, whether I knew that at the time, or not. I'm not at all sure about that. So, while certainly there was [an] implication that he was doing opposition research, it's gotta be for somebody. I mean, he's been hired by someone. My understanding was that the FBI didn't know who. And that is a factor to consider in this.²⁹²

But that was not the determinative factor, when you're talking about gathering foreign intelligence, not when it's against the backdrop of all of the other information there. And the FBI, who are experts in this, who have people who do this all day, every day, and the folks in DOJ who work with them on that, all believed that this was an important FISA to get, and to get now. So it's against the back-drop of that, of believing that it met the legal standards for a FISA, which appear to be borne out, given that it's been signed and reauthorized a number of times through the FISA court. It, I believed then and I believe now, it was the appropriate step to take. They're not all easy decisions that you make when you're DAG.

²⁹² FBI officials told us that the Crossfire Hurricane team did not know who hired Fusion GPS (which hired Steele) until after the first FISA application was filed, though, as described previously, the Crossfire Hurricane team and Steele's handling agent suspected Steele had been hired to conduct political opposition research. Documents indicate that by February and March 2017 it was broadly known among FBI officials involved with the investigation, and shared with senior NSD and ODAG officials, that Fusion GPS was hired first by a candidate during the Republican primaries and then later by someone related to the Democratic Party. Yates was removed as Acting Attorney General on January 30, 2017.

Following OI's presentation, Yates signed the application, and OI submitted the application to the FISC the same day. By her signature, and as stated in the application, Yates found that the application satisfied the criteria and requirements of the FISA statute and approved its filing with the court.²⁹³

E. Final Orders

The final FISA application included proposed orders, which were signed by then Chief Judge of the FISC, Rosemary Collyer, on October 21, 2016. According to NSD, the Chief Judge signed the final orders as proposed by the government in their entirety, without holding a hearing.

The primary order and warrant stated that the court found, based upon the facts submitted in the verified application, that there was probable cause to believe that Russia is a foreign power and that Carter Page was an agent of Russia under 50 U.S.C. § 1801(b)(2)(E). The court also found that the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. The court authorized the requested electronic surveillance [REDACTED] for 90 days [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] to effectuate the electronic surveillance [REDACTED] authorized by the court. The authorization permitted the government to, among other things, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] by Carter Page. This included [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] during the 90-day period. The authorization also permitted the government to [REDACTED]

IV. Inaccurate, Incomplete, or Undocumented Information in the First FISA Application

Our review revealed instances in which factual assertions relied upon in the first FISA application targeting Carter Page were inaccurate, incomplete, or unsupported by appropriate documentation, based upon information the FBI had in its possession at the time the application was filed. We describe the most significant instances below and provide additional examples in a chart in Appendix One. We found no evidence that the OI Attorney, NSD supervisors, ODAG officials, or Yates were made aware of these issues by the FBI before the first FISA application was submitted to the court. Although we also found no evidence that Comey had been made aware of these issues at the time he certified the application, as more fully discussed in our analysis in Chapter Eleven, multiple factors made it difficult for us to precisely determine the extent of Comey's or

²⁹³ Her signature also specifically authorized [REDACTED]

regarding Person 1, and that the FBI had an open counterintelligence investigation on Person 1. Those facts were relevant to OI's assessment of the strength of the information in the FISA application and, based on what we were told was the Department's practice, likely would have been included by OI in the application so that the FISC could consider the information in deciding whether to grant the requested FISA authority.

D. September 23 Media Disclosure

As described earlier, the final FISA application included the FBI's assessment in Footnote 18 that the FBI "does not believe that [Steele] directly provided...to the press" the information in the September 23 *Yahoo News* article concerning the investigation of Carter Page and his alleged meetings with Sechin and Divyekin. The basis for this assessment, as asserted in the application, was that Steele told the FBI that he "only provided this information to the business associate and the FBI." However, this assertion of what Steele said was inaccurate, and the documentation in the Woods File did not support it.

The documentation in the Woods File relied upon for this assertion was a written summary of the meeting in early October with Steele. The summary was drafted by Case Agent 2 and, as noted above, was emailed to the Crossfire Hurricane team a day after the meeting. This Woods document, however, did not state or otherwise indicate that Steele only provided the information to his business associate and the FBI. Indeed, the Woods document noted that Steele told the team that he also had provided his election reports to his contacts at the State Department. Neither Case Agent 1 nor SSA 1, who performed the Woods Procedures on this application, noted this error, and it is not clear upon what basis they believed they had verified the factual assertion in the footnote about the FBI's assessment of who provided information to the media for the September 23 news article. Both Case Agent 1 and SSA 1 told the OIG that they may have mistakenly been thinking the footnote said Steele gave the information to the "U.S. government" rather than "the FBI."

As described in Chapter Six, during his OIG interview, Steele told us that in September he and Simpson gave an "off-the-record" briefing to a small number of journalists about his reporting. Steele said he did not have permission to disclose to the OIG who attended this briefing but acknowledged that *Yahoo News* was identified in one of the court filings in the foreign litigation as having been present.³⁰⁴ The author of the *Yahoo News* article reported publicly in February 2018 that he received a briefing from Steele on the information discussed in the article

³⁰⁴ Steele told us that he did not know if the "Western intelligence source" cited in the September 23 *Yahoo News* article was a reference to him. He said he had understood that the media briefing he gave was "off-the-record." He said that he believed that *Yahoo News* had a source in the FBI or otherwise in the U.S. government who provided the information in the article. As we described in Chapter Four, the author of the *Yahoo News* article has written that Steele was the "Western intelligence source." See *Russian Roulette: The Inside Story of Putin's War on America and the Election of Donald Trump* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2018), 227.

before the article was published, although the author also stated that he did not rely solely on Steele in his reporting.³⁰⁵

Neither of the FBI's two written summaries of the meeting in early October 2016 with Steele indicate that Steele was asked specifically about the article or generally about contacts with the media. During our interview with Steele, he told us that he was "fairly sure" the FBI team did not ask him at the meeting or at any other time, but that had they asked, he would have told them about his interactions with the media. The OI Attorney surmised in an October 14 email to the OI Unit Chief that the FBI team had not asked Steele those questions. The OI Attorney told us that he did not recall whether he sought or received clarity on whether the FBI team had specifically asked Steele about the *Yahoo News* disclosure. He said that he probably would have included more information in the application if he had additional clarity on that point.

As detailed in Chapter Four, we found no documentation demonstrating that Steele was asked by the FBI whether he was the source of the *Yahoo News* article disclosure or told the FBI he was not. Handling Agent 1 told us that he had no idea how the FBI made its assessment that Steele's business associate or the law firm likely provided the information to the media. We found that the basis for that assessment was neither accurate nor supported by appropriate documentation, demonstrating a failure in the Woods process. Further, as we describe in Chapter Seven, as the FBI learned new information about Steele's disclosures to the media—from the source himself, from Department attorney Bruce Ohr, and from media reports of the source's admissions in court filings in the foreign litigation—the FBI did not make changes in any of the three later FISA renewal applications to reflect this new information.

E. Papadopoulos's Denials to an FBI CHS in September 2016

As described earlier, one of the main elements relied upon by the FBI in support of its probable cause showing was the FFG information concerning George Papadopoulos and the reported offer or suggestion of assistance from the Russians to someone associated with the Trump campaign. Specifically, the government stated the following in the FISA application:

In or about March 2016, George Papadopoulos [footnote omitted] and Carter Page (the target of this application) were publicly identified by Candidate #1 as part of his/her foreign policy team. Based on reporting from a friendly foreign government, which has provided reliable information in the past...the FBI believes that the Russian Government's efforts are being coordinated with Page and perhaps other individuals associated with Candidate #1's campaign. In or about July 2016, the above-referenced friendly foreign government provided information to a senior official within the U.S. [government]

³⁰⁵ See "Yahoo News' Michael Isikoff Describes Crucial Meeting Cited in Nunes Memo," *Yahoo News*, February 2, 2018, www.yahoo.com/news/yahoo-news-michael-isikoff-describes-crucial-meeting-cited-nunes-memo-231005733.html (accessed Dec. 2, 2019).

regarding efforts made by the Russian Government to influence the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. Specifically, according to this information, during a meeting in or about April 2016 between officials of the friendly foreign government and George Papadopoulos...Papadopoulos suggested that Candidate #1's campaign had received some kind of suggestion from Russia that Russia could assist with the anonymous release of information during the campaign that would be damaging to another candidate for U.S. President (Candidate #2). It was unclear whether Papadopoulos or the Russians were referring to material acquired publicly or through other means. It was also unclear from this reporting how Candidate #1's campaign reacted to the alleged Russian offer. Nevertheless, as discussed below, the FBI believes that election influence efforts are being coordinated between the RIS and Page, and possibly others.³⁰⁶

However, during a September 2016 CHS meeting conducted by the FBI, which was consensually monitored, Papadopoulos told an FBI CHS that, to his knowledge, no one associated with the Trump campaign was collaborating with Russia or with outside groups like WikiLeaks in the release of emails. The FISA application did not include the statements Papadopoulos made to this CHS that were in conflict with information included in the FISA application.

Case Agent 1 told us that he did not recall whether he advised the OI Attorney about Papadopoulos's denial in September 2016 but that, if he did not, it may have been an oversight. He also said that the Crossfire Hurricane team's assessment was that the Papadopoulos denial was a rehearsed response, and that he did not view the information as particularly germane to the investigation of Carter Page.³⁰⁷ We were advised by NSD that it did not know about this denial by Papadopoulos until May 2018, after ODAG found the information while reviewing documents for possible production to Congressional committees. The OI Attorney told us that he had no memory of being aware of this CHS meeting at any time before May 2018.

As described in Chapter Eight, in July 2018, after learning this information, NSD submitted a letter to the FISC under Rule 13(a) of the Court's Rules of Procedure, notifying the court of additional information relevant to the Carter Page FISA applications. The Rule 13(a) letter included Papadopoulos's statements to the

³⁰⁶ Although the application stated that the meeting between the FFG and Papadopoulos occurred in April 2016, FBI documents indicate the meeting occurred in May 2016.

³⁰⁷ After reviewing a draft of this report, Case Agent 1 told the OIG that he and the team discounted Papadopoulos's denials for several reasons, but that, in hindsight, he now realizes that those denials, and the team's assessment of those denials, should have been shared with OI "in order for [OI] to make the determination whether [those denials] should be in the application."

FBI CHS in September 2016, as well as similar statements Papadopoulos made to a CHS in late October 2016, after the first application was filed.³⁰⁸ The letter stated:

The above-described additional background information concerning Papadopoulos's September 2016 meeting with [an FBI CHS] and October 2016 discussion with a separate CHS would have been included in the applications had it been known to NSD at the time, as Papadopoulos's statements relate to the question of whether Papadopoulos was aware of or involved in coordination of election influence efforts between the RIS and members of Candidate #1's campaign. Even had this information been included, the totality of information submitted in these applications concerning Page's activities was sufficient to support the Court's finding of probable cause that Page was acting as an agent of a foreign power. [Footnote omitted].

Evans told the OIG that a FISA target's denial of facts asserted in a FISA application should be included in the application, even in instances where the FBI makes an assessment that the target making the denial is not being candid or truthful. According to Evans, there was no question in his mind that the Papadopoulos denial to the CHS in September 2016 was relevant to the court's consideration of the first application. In fact, later renewal applications advised the court of denials made by Papadopoulos to the FBI over the course of several interviews in 2017, as well as the FBI's belief that Papadopoulos provided misleading and incomplete information.³⁰⁹

F. Carter Page's Denials to an FBI CHS in August and October 2016

As described earlier in this chapter, the FBI conducted CHS meetings involving Carter Page in August and October 2016. We found that statements made by Page during these meetings, which conflicted with information included in the first FISA application, were not provided by the FBI to OI, and were not disclosed in the first FISA application.

In August 2016, as we describe in Chapter Ten, the FBI consensually monitored and recorded a meeting between Carter Page and an FBI CHS, during which Page said that he had "literally never met" or "said one word to" Paul Manafort, and that Manafort had not responded to any of Page's emails. Page

³⁰⁸ In a footnote, the letter also advised the court that Papadopoulos made similar statements to the FBI during an interview in late January 2017, after Renewal Application No. 1 was filed and before Renewal Application No. 2.

³⁰⁹ As described later in Chapter Eight, in February 2017, the FBI interviewed Joseph Mifsud who the FBI believed communicated to Papadopoulos the alleged offer from the Russians. According to FBI documents, Mifsud denied having advance knowledge that Russia was in possession of DNC emails and denied passing any offers or proffers to Papadopoulos. As described in Chapter Eight, this information was not included in the later renewal applications.

made similar statements during one of his interviews with the FBI in March 2017.³¹⁰ Although the first Carter Page FISA application and subsequent renewal applications alleged that Page was acting as an intermediary between Manafort and the Russian government as part of a “well-developed conspiracy” (from Report 95), none of the applications included statements from Carter Page to the CHS that conflicted with the conspiracy allegation.

The statements made by Page in August 2016 were not provided to OI prior to the filing of the first FISA application. The OI Attorney told us that, like the September 2016 CHS meeting involving Papadopoulos, he had no memory of being made aware of Page’s August 2016 statements regarding Manafort before the first FISA application was filed. Case Agent 1 told us that he did not discuss these statements with the OI Attorney because he did not view them as contrary to the allegations in Report 95, in that it was possible that Manafort used Page as an intermediary without communicating directly with Page.³¹¹

We found that information about the August 2016 meeting was first shared with the OI Attorney on or about June 20, 2017, when Case Agent 6 sent the OI Attorney a 163-page document containing the statements made by Page during the meeting. As described in Chapter Seven, Case Agent 6, to bolster probable cause, had added to the draft of FISA Renewal Application No. 3 statements that Page made during this meeting about an “October Surprise” involving an “email dump” of “33 thousand” emails. The OI Attorney told us that he used the 163-page document to accurately quote in the final renewal application Page’s statements concerning the “October Surprise,” but that he did not read the other aspects of the document and that the case agent did not flag for him the statements Page made about Manafort. The OI Attorney told us that these statements, which were available to the FBI before the first application, should have been flagged by the FBI for inclusion in all of the FISA applications because they were relevant to the court’s assessment of the allegations concerning Manafort’s use of Page as an intermediary with Russia. Case Agent 6 told us that he did not know that Page made the statement about Manafort because the August 2016 meeting took place before he was assigned to the investigation. He said that the reason he knew about the “October Surprise” statements in the document was that he had heard about them from Case Agent 1 and did a word search to find the specific discussion of that topic.

Regarding the similar statement Page made during one of his March 2017 interviews with the FBI, the OI Attorney told us that Case Agent 6 also did not flag this statement for him, but added that he (OI Attorney) should have noticed the

³¹⁰ According to Evans, Page’s statement concerning Manafort in August 2016 “arguably carries more significance” than Page’s later statements because the August 2016 statements took place before Page would have learned from the media that he was under investigation by the FBI.

³¹¹ After reviewing a draft of this report, Case Agent 1 told the OIG that, because the Crossfire Hurricane team did not receive Report 95 until several weeks after Page told the CHS that he had “literally never met” Manafort, Case Agent 1 “may have overlooked” this statement when the FISA application was being prepared. He acknowledged that he should have provided the information to the OI attorney.

statement himself in the interview summary Case Agent 6 forwarded to him on March 24, 2017, since it was only five pages, and the OI Attorney had read the entire document.

As described previously, the FISA application contained several statements Carter Page made to an FBI CHS during a consensually monitored and recorded meeting in October 2016, before the first FISA application was filed. In an email sent the same day as the CHS meeting to Case Agent 1 and other members of the Crossfire Hurricane team, the OGC Attorney asked the team to promptly send OI information about the meeting, including, among other things, any “exculpatory” statements made by Carter Page during this meeting, which was “probably the most important” information to provide to OI. Case Agent 1 thereafter provided to OI, on the same day as the October 2016 meeting, some of the statements made by Page to the CHS.

We determined, however, that the information Case Agent 1 provided to OI, which was incorporated into the first FISA application, did not fully or accurately describe the information obtained by the FBI as a result of the meeting. According to the first FISA application, Page told the CHS during the meeting that the Russians would be giving him an “open checkbook.” The application further stated that Page did not “provide [the CHS] any specific details to refute, dispel, or clarify the media reporting” regarding Page’s contacts with Russian officials Sechin and Divyekin, but that he made “vague statements that minimized his activities.” However, the application failed to include Page’s statement during the meeting in which Page specifically denied meeting with Sechin and Divyekin, and denied even knowing who Divyekin was. The application did not contain these denials even though the application relied upon the allegations in Report 94 that Page had secret meetings with both Sechin and Divyekin while in Moscow in July 2016. The application also failed to include the fact that Page denied to the CHS knowing anything about the disclosure by WikiLeaks of hacked DNC emails, which was contrary to the information from Report 95 in the application. Further, the application alleged that “Page helped influence” the Republican Party “to alter [its] platform to be more sympathetic to the Russian cause.” However, it did not reference the fact that Page said to the CHS during their meeting that he “stayed clear of that—there was a lot of conspiracy theories that I was one of them...[but] totally off the record...members of our team were working on that, and...in retrospect it’s way better off that I...remained at arms length.”³¹²

When we asked Case Agent 1 why he failed to provide this information from the October CHS meeting to the OI Attorney in advance of the first FISA application, he told us that he did not think that Page’s statements on these issues were specific. We noted, however, Case Agent 1 used the transcripts of the recording as the support in the Woods File for the statements in the FISA

³¹² Page made other statements denying culpability to a FBI CHS during a consensually recorded meeting in January 2017, in which he generally criticized the Steele reports that had recently been published by *BuzzFeed*, calling them “complete lies,” and said that the FBI was provided “false” evidence against him. We found no evidence that the FBI provided this information to OI for its consideration.

applications. We further noted that the documents in the Woods File specifically stated that Page “denied meeting with Sechin/Divyekin,” and said he “stayed clear” of the efforts of the Republican platform committee and knew “nothing about” WikiLeaks. Neither Case Agent 1 nor SSA 1 noted the inconsistency during the Woods Procedures, even though instant messages show that SSA 1 also knew as of October 17 that Page denied ever knowing Divyekin. This inconsistency was also not noted during the Woods Procedures on the subsequent FISA renewal applications, and none of the three later FISA renewal applications included Page's denials to the CHS.

We found no information indicating that the FBI provided OI with the documents containing Page’s denials before finalizing the first FISA application. Instead, Case Agent 1 provided a summary that did not contain those denials to the OI Attorney and that the OI Attorney relied upon that summary in drafting the first application. Evans told us that had NSD known of Page’s denials regarding Sechin and Divyekin, it was the kind of information that would have been included in the application.

Before FISA Renewal Application No. 1, was filed in January 2017, the OI Attorney did receive the documents containing the denials Page made to the CHS in October 2016. Yet, the information about the meeting remained unchanged in the renewal applications. The OI Attorney told us that he did not recall the circumstances surrounding this, but he acknowledged that he should have updated the descriptions in the renewal applications to include Page’s denials.

In the next chapter, we describe the FBI’s activities involving Steele after the first FISA application, including the FBI’s decision to close Steele as a CHS and the FBI’s efforts to assess Steele’s election reporting in 2016 and 2017.

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